01063

1963/11/01

261. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, November 1, 1963—5 p.m.

854. CINCPAC for POLAD.

1. Admiral Felt, Minister Martin, Embassy interpreter and I met with Diem from 10:00 am until 11:15 today. Afterwards I spoke alone with Diem for 20 minutes (see separate telegram).[2]

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[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL 15-1 S VIET. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC. Received at 7:26 a.m. and passed to the White House at 8:35 a.m.

[2] *Infra.*

2. Diem began with monologue covering in somewhat condensed manner same ground covered in September 29 conversation with McNamara, Taylor, Harkins and myself. See Embassy memcon forwarded under Embassy Airgram A–244 dated October 3.[3]

3. Diem added following with unusual directness:

a. Junior CIA officers were poisoning atmosphere by spreading rumors of coups against him. Said one such officer, Hodges has recently told General Staff that GVN planning demonstration against American Embassy. Hodges had remarked that if this happened, Seventh Fleet would land, etc. Diem remarked Hodges clearly knew more about this than he did but added that enemy would take advantage such rumors. Said two Viet Cong killed south of Saigon October 23 had on person VC plans for taking advantage of any coup attempt to seize Saigon.

b. USG plan to withhold aid would hurt war effort, would work special hardship on soldiers and unpaid Strategic Hamlet guards (Combatant Youths). He planned measures to protect them economically as much as possible. Further lamented cutoff of aid in flour and especially in milk.

c. USG was entirely wrong in withholding subsidy for Special Forces. These forces were not independent, as USG seemed to allege, but were directly subordinated to ARVN General Staff, which had directed their use in action against pagodas August 21 after ARVN senior officers had unanimously told Diem such action necessary. Added lamely that USG may have gotten false impression of Special Forces independence because their particular type of mission often involved them in action crossing normal division or corps sectors borders.

Lodge

[3] Document 158.

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INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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Action

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Info

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[redacted]

Control: 224

Rec'd: NOVEMBER 1, 1963 02

7:26 A.M.

FROM: SAIGON

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 854, NOVEMBER 1, 5 P.M.

PRIORITY

ACTION DEPARTMENT 854; INFORMATION CINCPAC 460

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. ADMIRAL FELT, MINISTER MARTIN, EMBASSY INTERPRETER AND I MET WITH DIEM FROM 10:00 AM UNTIL 11:15 TODAY. AFTERWARDS I SPOKE ALONE WITH DIEM FOR 20 MINUTES (SEE SEPARATE TELEGRAM).

2. DIEM BEGAN WITH MONOLOGUE COVERING IN SOMEWHAT CONDENSED MANNER SAME GROUND COVERED IN SEPTEMBER 29 CONVERSATION WITH MCNAMARA, TAYLOR, HARKINS AND MYSELF. SEE EMBASSY MEMCON FORWARDED UNDER EMBASSY AIRGRAM A-244 DATED OCTOBER 3.

3. DIEM ADDED FOLLOWING WITH UNUSUAL DIRECTNESS:

[redacted] SAID TWO VIET CONG KILLED SOUTH OF SAIGON OCTOBER 23 HAD ON PERSON VC PLANS FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ANY COUP ATTEMPT TO SEIZE SAIGON.

B. USG PLAN TO WITHHOLD AID WOULD HURT WAR EFFORT, WOULD WORK ESPECIAL HARDSHIP ON SOLDIERS AND UNPAID STRATEGIC HAMLET GUARD (COMBATANT YOUTH).

SANITIZED

[redacted]

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Dept. of State (NLK-83-64)

BY MHM NARS, DATE 4/1/83

[redacted]

-2- 854, NOVEMBER 1, 5 P.M., FROM SAIGON

(COMBATANT YOUTH). HE PLANNED MEASURES TO PROTECT THEM ECONOMICALLY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. FURTHER LAMENTED CUTOFF OF AID IN FLOUR AND ESPECIALLY IN MILK.

C. USG WAS ENTIRELY WRONG IN WITHHOLDING SUBSIDY FOR SPECIAL FORCES. THESE FORCES WERE NOT INDEPENDENT, AS USG SEEMED TO ALLEGE, BUT WERE DIRECTLY SUBORDINATED TO ARVN GENERAL STAFF, WHICH HAD DIRECTED THEIR USE IN ACTION AGAINST PAGODAS AUGUST 21 AFTER ARVN SENIOR OFFICERS HAD UNANIMOUSLY TOLD DIEM SUCH ACTION NECESSARY. ADDED LAMELY THAT USG MAY HAVE GOTTEN FALSE IMPRESSION OF SPECIAL FORCES INDEPENDENCE BECAUSE THEIR PARTICULAR TYPE OF MISSION OFTEN INVOLVED THEM IN ACTIONS CROSSING NORMAL DIVISION OR CORPS SECTORS BORDERS.

GP-3.

LODGE

VLH

NOTE: PASSED WHITE HOUSE 11/1/63, 8:35A.M.

[redacted]